THE SAILOR'S PAINTING

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THE SAILOR'S PAINTING

By

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GREETINGS

It is a great personal pleasure to be able to count you among my friends, and to have the opportunity of extending to you the Season's Greetings.

At the same time, I am offering you a little story never hitherto published, entitled "The Sailor's Painting," in the hope that you will find in its reading both pleasure and inspiration.

Please accept this story together with my best wishes that you and yours may have a right Merry Christmas and a really Happy New Year.

C. C. Ronalds

Christmas 1927

PREFACE

"The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream."

THE CHRISTMAS *festival is a wonderful inspiration to joy and good cheer, but are not all the good things of life the result of inspiration that comes to us in many forms? The triumphs of architecture, of painting, of literature, of the mechanical arts, of government and law—what are these, after all, but the expression, in varying form, of the love of order and beauty that comes from the mysterious thing called inspiration?*

Beauty is for every man, though for every man there may be a different revelation.

So the mechanic on the bench shall see his Beauty reflected in the shimmering finish of polished steel; the weaver at the loom may find her enmeshed in the texture of silk

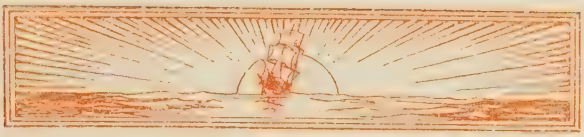
that flows from warp and weft; she shall come to the farmer as he looks over the long rows of new-turned spring earth—and all of us may catch glimpses of her even in the common round of the daily task.

In the story that follows, the sailor, trying to express his vision, felt himself like Wordsworth when he saw Peel Castle in a storm:

> *"Ah! then, if mine had been the painter's hand,*
> *To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,*
> *The light that never was on sea or land,*
> *The consecration and the poet's dream."*

The sailor sought the "gleam" and found it. Perhaps each of us, in a different way, may find the "gleam" that helps us to express the best that is in us if we regard beauty, in whatever form it may appear, as something not of sea or land, but shining through both for the primary purpose of inspiring the human mind to better work and higher impulse.

C. C. R.



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HE was a sailor whose face had been bitten by arctic winds and burned by tropic suns. In his eyes was the look that comes to men who have seen and known all manner of men and women—who have read the secrets of many strange ports, and found out much about life from long nights' study of the seven seas and the eternal skies.

Never had so strange a man drifted into the art school.

"I want to study painting."

The direct statement stirred the old teacher. He smiled.

"You have studied before?"

"No! Between watches for many years I have tried to paint but something is wrong—missing."

"I see. Perhaps you need the fundamentals of technique—I mean the basic rules that will enable you by practice to achieve the true conception of art and the skill of hand that make paintings."

"No!" It was a blunt negative. "I need beauty."

The puzzled teacher recommended the antique class—drawing from plaster casts and models. Again there was the firm dissent.

"I must go into a life class."

So the sailor came night after night and sat in a faraway corner of the room where none could see his work. Often he would fix a searching gaze upon the beautiful model for a moment, then his eyes would look down on the sketch paper for the better part of an hour though his clenched hands made no effort to draw or paint. Always he destroyed his sketches as fast as he made them, refusing to show them

to the teacher until no more was said to the odd, silent worker.

After some months, he began to work earnestly, almost feverishly, upon a canvas that he brought to school in a tin case. When, one night, as he was leaving the school, his teacher commented upon his energy, the sailor answered:

"My money is almost spent. I must go back to sea in two weeks."

"May I see your picture? Perhaps I could help you."

"No! Not now. But before I go."

The sailor came one night with a bag and knapsack along with the tin case in which he kept his canvas.

Marie, of all the models the most lovely, was posing.

There was a great joy in the sailor's face —a fierce, intense joy.

He painted as a man who is finishing his life work—as Keats must have written

when he was ending the poem that begins,

"*A thing of beauty is a joy forever. . .*"

When all the students had gone, and Marie had dressed, the sailor called both her and the teacher to look at his finished picture.

It was a miracle, a marvelous painting —not of the perfect body and straight, clean limbs of Marie—not of her face with its haunting beauty, but of a three-masted schooner, full-sailed, running before the wind in a blue-and-white sea.

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